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VISCOUNT NORTHCLIFFE

A snapshot taken by the author at Mentone, March, 1919

THE REAL LORD NORTHCLIFFE

Some Personal Recollections
of a Private Secretary
1902-1922

BY
LOUISE OWEN

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THE REAL LORD NORTHCLIFFE

IT is an impertinence for me to attempt a pen picture of my Chief, Lord Northcliffe. No one person could do justice to that marvellous personality, even in several volumes. More able pens than mine have written, and will write, of his great achievements. All I attempt is to take the great public, whom he loved so dearly, into my confidence, and let them see him as I knew him, as a human person with many faults, but very small ones compared to his wonderful generous nature, and charming characteristics.

In March, 1902, I applied to him for the post of private secretary. It was presumptuous of me, as I was untrained, but my only excuse was, that having been brought up in the atmosphere of newspapers, the paper and ink had penetrated to my very bones.

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My mother died when I was a small child. My father died before my school days should have ended, and I was faced with the problem of earning my living, in addition to having the care of two younger sisters. I think all people have a natural talent for some one thing. I knew mine was for clothes. Without being taught I could design, cut out and make any garment, make it so that not even the sharp eyes of my friends could detect the amateur hand. I was tempting Providence by not utilizing this gift, but my heart wasn't in it. Even in my poorest days I parted with my spare pennies to buy newspapers. I hated to feel after my father's death that I was drifting away from the core of things.

My first impression of Alfred Harmsworth was his kindness, and soft cultivated voice. I can see him now, standing by the fireplace with his elbow on the mantelpiece. He was particularly handsome, fresh and wholesome looking, tall, broad-shouldered, with a finely shaped massive head, covered with thick, smooth, cendré coloured hair, one lock of which fell over the left side of his forehead. His face was clean-shaven, and I noticed his chiselled features, finely shaped nose, determined mouth, and strong square jaw. His grey eyes were

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kind but penetrating, and he fired off questions at me in a simple direct manner. It was his lack of affectation, and snobbishness, that impressed me most at that momentous interview.

His room at Carmelite House was luxuriously furnished—more like a library in a country mansion—nothing of the stereotyped office here, with hard chairs upholstered in leather, ordinary desks, and linoleum-covered floors. I noticed the thick carpet into which my feet sank as I walked, the soft green velvet curtains, the photographs of his dear father and mother on his desk, the bookcases reaching from floor to ceiling filled with richly bound volumes; but what attracted my attention most were the masses of beautiful flowers. He saw me glance at them.

“I spend a number of my working hours in this room, so I like to surround myself with beautiful things, and the flowers give me great joy. I have them sent up from my country house twice a week.”

He was almost feminine in his anxiety that I should be comfortable and at ease. He pulled up an armchair for me, and placed it in front of the roaring fire. He talked, not as if I were a stranger applying for a post, but as a friend

and equal. He explained how he needed someone almost to anticipate what he wanted done, someone who would make his interests her interests, who could interview for him, go through his correspondence and sift the wheat from the chaff, who would watch his newspapers and discover the weaknesses of one or the other, who would not keep an eye on the clock—meaning no fixed hours. All this appealed to me. Why, I thought, this is my dream fulfilled. Yes, I can do all that. But with fear and trembling I blurted out: “My shorthand and typewriting are a bit weak—I have been working at them for three months, but have no confidence.”

“Don’t be nervous, you will have plenty of work, and with practice you will improve,” he replied. “I don’t want a mere machine; I want somebody with tact, judgment and imagination.”

As I am Irish, I said I had all these!

“You will start on Monday then.”

I had realized by now that Alfred Harmsworth was no ordinary man. Even the office boy who ushered me in was dressed in an Eton suit, but in spite of this unusual atmosphere, his extremely simple and natural manner dominated his surroundings.

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“What about salary?” I ventured, the picture of my little home and sisters loomed in front of me.

“Oh, I haven’t thought of it, but that will be all right,” he replied.

“But you tell me,” I urged, full of anxiety, “I am replacing a man who is taking on more responsibility; what have you been paying him?”

“That is quite different, he is a man with dependants, and you are only a girl.”

“But I too have responsibilities; I have no parents; no one I can turn to for help, and I have two sisters to support.”

Alfred Harmsworth saw the force of my argument, and said, “Well, at the end of the week we will discuss the matter again, and if you make my interests your interests, and if I find you have gumption and industry, in fact, if you are of help to me I will pay you well.”

And so began the fight for equal wage for men and women. He paid, during the subsequent years, substantial salaries to the women members of his staff, a very constructive policy in view of woman’s ever-increasing participation in public life. No joy that I have experienced since can be compared with that feeling of security and relief which filled me as I passed out of Carmelite House. The joyous-

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ness which radiated from him to all about him communicated itself to me, and through me to my little home. We were indeed a very happy family.

Monday came at last, but not the day I imagined. Mr. Sutton (now Sir George Sutton, Bart.) entered my room, which adjoined Lord Northcliffe's, and gave me some newspapers to read. Except for this interruption I saw no one, and had no work. I did have the sense, however, to go out to lunch. The following day another visit from Mr. Sutton, "Mr. Alfred will not be in to-day." Such was the state of my nerves that I muttered, "Thank God!"

Mr. Harmsworth (as he was then) appeared on Wednesday. He had been staying in the country, and said he had purposely left me alone to give me time to settle down. Every day showed the depth of his understanding, small things, but so far-reaching.

His methods of work, in those times long ago (1902), may interest my readers. He usually appeared about 11 o'clock, having read his own, and every other morning newspaper, so he was well equipped for continuing his work

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at Carmelite House. It was his habit to jot down in the early hours criticisms and suggestions on everything conceivable, and from these notes we started the day's work. I marvelled at his concentration ; he did not waste a second of time. He dealt with his vast correspondence, gave me lists of people whom he wished to see, saw the heads of the various departments. Nothing connected with his vast organization seemed too trivial for his notice ; those steel grey eyes of his noted everything, and his hearing was just as acute. His power of looking ahead, his gift of acquiring information, startled me ; his knowledge of affairs was uncanny. He had a curious instinct for asking questions, and seemed to know each subject as thoroughly as the specialists themselves.

The days passed all too swiftly. It was one round of excitement for me. The letters I had to answer touched on every imaginable subject. The people seeking interviews represented the highest and the lowest, from minor Royalties, Cabinet Ministers, distinguished foreigners, our leaders from overseas, naval and military men of high rank, politicians, men and women in the public eye, writers, artists and musicians of note. These, down to the humblest of men and women, even ex-convicts, all sought out my

Chief. There was scarcely a minute's interval, and it surprised me how he could switch off so completely from one subject to another. He was tireless ; he worked from morning until night.

During the few first weeks of my life at Carmelite House I knew that if I was to succeed I must acquaint myself with every subject that interested him, and I could best accomplish that by reading the newspapers diligently, so that when he arrived at the office my knowledge of current affairs would not disgrace me. I arranged with my newsagent that a complete set should be delivered to me at my home by 6 o'clock every morning, and at that time I started work. I read carefully *The Times*, *Morning Post*, *Telegraph*, *Standard*, *Chronicle*, and *Express*, and cut out and pasted on sheets of paper all news or special features I found in these journals which did not appear in ours. I also cut out from our papers items of news which we had, and our rivals had missed, so that he could see at a glance if we had been beaten, though I confess with pleasure that that seldom happened. This may seem a small task, but it took me a considerable time to do thoroughly. I often had a very hurried breakfast to enable me to reach Carmelite House at 10 o'clock. I did not disclose to anyone the

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hours of work I put in on this job, and when the Chief would say : "These sheets are very useful ; I am glad you do them," I felt more than recompensed for my task.

For many years my whole thoughts and efforts were devoted to his work. I read up all I could about him, and the business. I kept in my private notebook the names of all important members of the staff, their work, their home addresses, and their telephone numbers, every little detail that would help me to be useful to him. I soon learned to notice the quality of the paper, the printing, the ink, and the make-up, and also the posters ; I kept charts of the circulation of the daily, weekly, and monthly journals, so that he could see at a glance the rise or fall of any one publication. To save his eyesight I re-wrote all important illegible communications which otherwise would have been consigned to the waste-paper basket. Many important people owe me thanks !

My clothes sense, to which I have referred, served me exceedingly well. During my leisure hours at home, I made my own and my sisters' clothes, so I knew when our fashion papers

were weak, and when the "Woman's page" of the *Daily Mail* was not practical. It was my duty to criticise the fashion designs and women's articles, so that my experience in my little home stood me in good stead. I tested the cookery recipes, also the paper patterns. My attention had for a long time been fixed on those very charming sketches in the *Evening Standard* by Miss Bessie Ascough, and the delightful weekly column in the *Queen* by M. E. Clarke. I never tired of telling my Chief the pleasure I derived from the work of both these clever people. I am very proud that for many years they have been valued members of the staff. Miss Ascough's sketches are world-famous ; I have seen them in the salons of the most exclusive dressmakers in Paris, London and New York ; and Mrs. Clarke's delightful weekly article, appearing in *The Times* every Monday from Paris, is one of the most attractive features of that journal.

I had to interview many people who were anxious to put before my Chief their schemes, inventions, and grievances, all having the fixed idea that if they could only meet him he would take up the subject dearest to their hearts in his journals. My habit of signing letters with surname and initial only, gave the impression

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that I was a man-secretary, and many callers, especially elderly gentlemen, were indignant when asked to submit their business to a mere “chit of a girl.” Not such a “chit,” for I assured them I could fully understand and deal intelligently with their requests, and that I was older than I looked, yet younger than my years, for on joining I had given a wrong age, like the soldier on enlistment, in order to get a “man’s” pay! When later on I wanted to deduct these years my Chief said, “Oh! No, a very poor excuse!”

A duty I greatly enjoyed was entertaining some of his Overseas visitors when he was very pressed for time. At his instructions, flowers and books awaited them at their hotels, and when they were leaving these shores, fruit and other gifts were sent to their ships.

It was customary to hold an Editorial Conference every afternoon, a “kind of Cabinet Meeting,” at which the Editors and special writers attended, when the outline of the next day’s paper was put forward, the leading news feature selected and the line to be taken discussed. Often Lord Northcliffe would alter the decision already arrived at, and instead of leaving the office about 6 or 7 o’clock as he probably had planned, he would write the leader himself. Walking up and down the

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length of his room, smoking a cigar, he would dictate it to me. He was fluent and very direct in his writing, and you could detect that clear penetrating intelligence behind the simple well-framed sentences. He wrote just as he talked, very descriptively, and not a word too many. These were the leaders which gave the *Daily Mail* that dynamic force, that independence, that total disregard for the feelings of politicians and other prominent people, and made his journals so world famous. His thoughts travelled beyond Westminster! He did not look at any one spot through a telescope, but rather used prism glasses of large diameter, which gave him as his "field of view" the whole world.

He was a demon for work. Often after an arduous day he would remember his promise to write an article, maybe for a prominent American or Overseas journalist, who wanted his impressions, or for an Editor of a small, unimportant paper. Whatever it was, he would do it. "I can't disappoint 'so and so,'" he would say; "I promised." Often, after starting work at 5 o'clock in the morning, he was so tired towards evening that he could hardly stand, and instead of going home to dinner he would invite one of the staff to take

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a simple meal with him at a neighbouring restaurant.

“ I am going to give you an extra pound a week, so that you can take a hansom cab when you are kept here late. I know what a struggle it is on a wet night trying to get inside an omnibus,” my Chief said to me. “ Remember it is for cab fares—not for finery ! ”

Not long afterwards many complaints reached him that I had been seen leaving Carmelite House in a hansom cab ! It was a most improper proceeding in those far-off days to ride by one’s self, and I can understand the young generation who may scan these pages thinking we had a very thin time of it. I often wondered why it was considered improper. Personally, I loved it, and thought the windows made a good frame for any woman ; certainly we all looked our best in them, much more attractive than when emerging in these days from an aeroplane, wearing cap and goggles. To be associated with a millionaire often leads one to extravagance, but in my early days the wasting of an eight guinea seat, purchased by my Chief for me to see King Edward’s Coronation, which was postponed, hurt me acutely, and it was long before I recovered from the shock. When eventually

it did take place, I was working hard at Carmelite House !

Lord Northcliffe was fascinating to men and women alike, and they found the hours spent in his company all too short. His personal charm captivated all, his conversational genius was combined with the rarest kind of sincerity and a total freedom from affectation. I remember Helen Mathers, the well-known authoress of "Comin' thro' the Rye," telling me of his good looks at the age of 16, and how he resembled a young Apollo. Not only women, but men well known in Fleet Street, repeated to me how handsome he was in his young days, that every head was turned to look at him as he passed with an utter lack of self-consciousness.

He had a supreme talent for friendship, and had a rare gift of inspiring the devotion of his staff. He was loved with boyish ardour by men of such diverse temperament as Thomas Marlowe, Charles Hands, H. W. Wilson, Hannen Swaffer, the late Twells Brex, and William McAlpin, his devoted friend and able representative for many years in Paris. All who came into personal contact with him felt the magnetism that induced them to put him first, even at the sacrifice of their own home life. He was a born leader, but never so absorbed in his own affairs that he was unable or unwilling to appreciate the work of others. He was the

first to send congratulations with unstinted praise for any achievement or exploit in any part of the world, no matter by whom it was accomplished. I always felt a certain pride that many splendid types of men loved my Chief and understood him. He enjoyed the friendship of patriots;—Cecil Rhodes, Lord Roberts, Sir Henry Wilson. To my knowledge Sir Henry Wilson consulted him often, and the National Service Movement, put before the country by our beloved “Bobs,” was helped both financially and publicly by him. Lord Roberts usually signed his letters to my Chief, “Yours affectionately,” surely a tribute from our great Field Marshal.

Lord Northcliffe impressed upon me the value of friendship. I remember that after I had been at Carmelite House a few months he startled me by saying, “I have tested you, my dear, and find you loyal and truthful, and now I shall take you fully into my confidence.” He counted off on his fingers his real friends, as he described them: “Harold (his brother, now Lord Rothermere), Sutton, Beeton (and another whose name for the moment I have forgotten), I trust them with everything, and your name” (touching his little finger) “will be added to the list. Remember, it is better to have a few real friends than hundreds of acquaintances. You now have a friend in me for life.”

No wonder I thought him the most marvellous person who had ever crossed my path, and I made every effort to uphold that trust.

Amongst ourselves we talked of him as "Alfred," or "Alfred the Great." He had a natural dignity of which nobody, however friendly he became, could take advantage. I remember, though, one youthful member failing to understand this. Lord Northcliffe invited him to his country house, and during his visit called him by his Christian name, which was rather a favourite habit of his. His young guest, forgetting his position, addressed his Chief not only personally, but in writing, as "My dear Alfred." It did not surprise me that his career on our staff was short.

He addressed all our sex as: "My dear!" an elastic term which may mean so much or so little! Whether we were married or single, young or old, made no difference. I chaffed him once: "You play for safety, and so avoid confusion among your lady friends." To which he laughingly agreed.

"Ah, my dear, you don't know them as I do; I have to be careful," and truthfully I did not.

It was a never-ending surprise to me how persistent some women were in their efforts to make his acquaintance, or improve the friendship already begun. Whether it was admiration for

him, or publicity and power for themselves, I did not fathom. I was often astonished that women whose title, name, wealth or ability assured them of a certain position, should be filled with anxiety for their names to be mentioned in the society columns of his newspapers. I have seen letters from women who had been present at the opera, or some other function, bitterly complaining that the names of their friends had appeared and their own been omitted. Others less exalted in the social scale were equally persistent seekers after notoriety.

I never see sandwiches without the vision of a little packet being left in my room every afternoon by a messenger boy. Taking it for granted it was but another kind thought of my Chief's to provide me with a little nourishment, I ate them. It was months before I discovered that they were not ordered for me by the Chief, but for the Chief by Lady —, who had a most casual acquaintance with him. She thought the way to the man's soul was : "Feed the brute."

I did, however, understand my own sex on one occasion. Before Lord Northcliffe launched the *Daily Mirror* in its first form as a women's newspaper, I repeatedly told him we did not require a newspaper for ourselves, we were quite content with those supplied to our men

folk ; but he thought otherwise, and the experiment cost him £100,000. He was the first to recognize his mistake and said, "It was simply another failure made by mere man in diagnosing women's needs!" What a hectic time that was ! Working night and day, a mixture of tragedy and comedy. The staff was composed of women, with the exception of three or four men in an advisory capacity. My sympathies were with the night Editor, who with no other male to support him was called upon to decide all disputes and preserve law and order. No wonder he rushed from Fleet Street, and went "back to the land" !

From the very beginning of Lord Northcliffe's career he paid his staff very liberally, and adopted the profit-sharing system for those who had helped him in his earliest days. His great publishing business, the Amalgamated Press, was so organized that the staff worked only five days a week. The wonderful success of this enterprise was due to those devoted workers who started with him over thirty years ago. Mr. A. E. Linforth, so popular in Fleetway House, was one of this little band ; he is now Vice-Chairman of the company.

Lord Northcliffe sent many members of his staffs to his delightful home at Grand Falls, Newfoundland, where some years ago he established his paper mills. They were sent not only

for a holiday, but for the additional advantage of keeping in touch with all sides of the business. The establishing of a town in the oldest colony of the British Empire is surely a romance in itself. This has been built in the midst of forest land, with well-designed and comfortable houses for the inhabitants, streets well paved, electric light, telephones, schools, churches, hospital, public library, bank, theatre, kinema, and even wireless. The Duke of Connaught, when Governor-General of Canada, paid a visit to Grand Falls, and occupied Lord Northcliffe's house. It is a very charming one, and was built from plans sent to him by the late Mark Twain, who remembered the admiration which Lord Northcliffe had expressed for his home while visiting him there.

When my Chief was taking a holiday in our own islands, on the Continent, or even so far afield as America, he would cable for several members of his various staffs to join him. He was a charming host, every wish anticipated, and arrangements made as if all were honoured guests, as indeed they were.

He was a genius in selecting men. There is a well-known story in Fleet Street of how he passed a young reporter on the staircase, and questioned him about his work and salary. The young man replied that he was happy and earning £8 a week.

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“Content?” Lord Northcliffe inquired.

“Yes, quite,” he answered.

“Then you had better look for another post, for nobody will make headway with me who is content with £8 a week on the Editorial Staff.”

I reminded him of this story and he said, “Yes, I recognized his limitations at once, my dear.”

Youth was a word I was constantly hearing, for my Chief was a great believer in it. He once remarked to me, “When I am forty I shall slack off, and not take on further responsibilities, and certainly not buy any newspapers.”

He made himself an impossible promise. Those who have followed his career know what he was doing at fifty, and what he would have done had he lived to sixty.

I was often urged by a sister, who lived in India, to leave Fleet Street and join her there. She thought I was wasting my youth, and leading a drab existence. She did not realize that the very atmosphere of the newspaper world is electrifying, and so penetrating that one can never be free of it; to me it was an earthly Paradise. My friends often chaffed me, and said my happiness would be complete if I could arrange for a little home to be built on the roof of Carmelite House! But the truth of it was that every day was a fresh adventure. We peeped behind the scenes, and so learned the

secrets of the world. We knew the inside stories of the so-called Cabinet crisis; the plottings of foreign countries, with their aims and ambitions; the principal figures in international scandals; the private lives of public people; the pulling of strings in political and other worlds; the motives, unknown to the general public, behind criminal and divorce cases; the inner lives of unscrupulous financiers. But not only the seamy side; we heard also of the conditions of labour, the sacrifices and untold heroism of the ordinary man and woman in the street. We heard of our countrymen overseas. Nothing too big or too small for the attention of the journalist. This variety was so fascinating that one's work became one's pleasure.

Lord Northcliffe had true sympathy with his staff; he understood them and their difficulties. All artists and writers are temperamental, and apt to feel very acutely. When something had gone wrong, and a stormy interview in a volcanic atmosphere had taken place, I would catch sight of a man leaving his room looking very despondent. I would mention it.

“ My dear,” he would say, “ I am so sorry; I didn’t mean to hurt him, but he was ‘ asleep ’ (or ‘ stupid ’ or ‘ indolent ’ or whatever it might be). Tell him to lunch with me.”

With great joy I would rush upstairs to the Editorial room, and tell the offender, still suf-

fering from his wounds, that the Chief wanted him downstairs. As we descended I would say : "Don't mention the little upheaval ; it is all over and the Chief has forgotten it." He would be the first to hold out his hand and say : "I was irritable," "not feeling well," or "worried."

Sometimes he would dictate to me a very angry letter, with instructions to see it delivered immediately. After he had signed it, if I thought it undeserved I would put it on one side (remembering that "the written letter remains") and purposely forget it. Later on I would show it to him, and ask if he still wished it sent. More often than not it was destroyed. The same with fiery messages, how often I thought it wiser to forget them !

No wonder those who knew him well adored him ; how could they help it ? They knew he was a genius, with a genius's unexpectedness. One never quite knew what he intended to do, or what he wanted done.

One day I ventured : "Tell me, did you ever imagine in your very young days you would have such a successful life ?"

"My dear," he replied, "I attribute my success, as you call it, to seeing ahead. I did not think my school-fellows were stupid, but I could always see farther than they could."

It was this gift of vision which, added to his

great power of concentration and grit, carried him on.

In some ways he was ruthless. He had no use for inefficiency. "I pay my staff well and treat them well, and I expect in return good service," and he usually had it. Having experienced impecunious days myself, I felt sorry when a man was dismissed, and if he had a wife and children I would plead for a second or even a third chance. Sometimes the man would get it, sometimes not. Nothing would alter his decision when he had formed an opinion of a man's value. "I know him better than you ; one cannot bolster up empty sacks," and later on his judgment proved correct.

One of my earliest recollections is the instalment of an electrophone in his room. He invited leading Editors of other journals, and our own special writers, to be present to hear Joseph Chamberlain deliver his celebrated speech on "Tariff Reform" at the Guildhall. It was a rare pleasure for me, as I had never heard him ; it seemed a miracle, so distinctly could I hear every word. That afternoon was recalled vividly to my mind last year, when I took a party of young people to the *Daily Mail* office

to initiate them into the mysteries of wireless. The doors of the room were closed, and they were amazed and interested when the operator fixed the receivers on their ears and they heard messages from across the Atlantic, from the Continent, and also from aeroplanes flying the channel.

My first acquaintance with the motor car was a ride, as a great privilege, in Lord Northcliffe's 90 h.p. Mercédès, which took two men to start the engine. How different from these days of the self-starter.

The *Daily Mail* gliding prizes take my thoughts back to the time when the Wright Brothers brought from America their flight invention, and came to Lord Northcliffe, who saw at once the possibilities, not only in warfare, but also in civil life. He urged the Government to give it attention. Lord Balfour and Mr. Winston Churchill were enthusiastic, others were indifferent. Can it be so long ago as 1909 when my Chief telephoned me early one morning : "Our country is no longer an island ; Blériot has flown the channel, and history is made to-day. Do you realize it is the first time an entry has been made otherwise than by ship ? We must send out invitations for a luncheon in his honour." The excitement when Blériot and Lord Northcliffe drove up together to the

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Savoy Hotel must still be very vivid in the minds of my friends at Carmelite House.

When thinking of him and his work my thoughts invariably turn to his mother. She was his ideal of womanhood and his devotion to her was immeasurable. It was his joy to take her away, just the two of them, for a holiday every summer, motoring or travelling on the Continent. I remember his pleasurable excitement when he took her to America, and to lunch at the White House at Washington with President Roosevelt. He was always speaking to me of his "wonderful mother," as he called her, and always visited, telephoned or wrote to her daily. She was his inspiration, and ever in his thoughts. Abraham Lincoln's words applied equally to Lord Northcliffe. "All that I am, all that I ever hope to be, I owe to my mother." He talked over with her his schemes and ambitions from his earliest days. If he had promised to dine or lunch with her, neither Kings nor Queens could keep him from that promise.

Before he went off on his world tour he looked so tired and worn that I suggested he should go instead to a nursing home and take a thorough rest.

"I have always wanted this trip," he

said, " and the doctors tell me my mother is in splendid health, so I am taking the opportunity of leaving her for a few months."

His last words to me on the eve of sailing were : " I shall pray every day for my mother." I replied : " Don't be over anxious, your brothers and sisters will look after her, they also adore her."

" Yes, I know that, but I am her first-born and she looks to me."

He cabled to her every day, and sent her long descriptive letters. The sympathy and understanding between this mother and son are rarely equalled in these days of hurry and scurry. Here was a man, whom so many thought ruthless, ambitious and self-advertising, showing even to me that natural boyish affection for his family. Often he would telephone from his mother's home : " I shall be at the office soon. I have had a delightful morning with mother and Christabel's (a favourite sister) children," and he did not tire of telling me of the games they all played together. The simplicity of the life there appealed to him. " Give a kiss and my love to mother, and tell her she is the only one." Such were his messages to her when he was dying. They buried him with her picture on his breast, and in his hands were clasped the little book, her gift to him, which he had with

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him always. He was very attached to his brothers and sisters, and always spoke of them to me in endearing terms. Lord Rothermere was his confidant and helper, and his opinion was asked and invariably taken before fresh schemes were launched. He constantly referred to his brother StJohn's fortitude and courage in taking up the threads of life and making good, in spite of the terrible motor accident, which crippled him and blotted out in a moment the promise of a great career.

I thought years ago that I was unusual, or more than up to date, in having the telephone fixed, not only by my bedside, but also in my bathroom. The Chief had a habit of ringing us up in turn at any moment of the early morning, and he was impatient if a maid asked for a message, so I always had my pencil and paper ready to take down any instructions, or even articles, through the telephone.

I soon discovered the adoration Lord Northcliffe had for children of all kinds and conditions. To my knowledge he practically adopted scores, educated them, planned their holidays. He sent some to the 'Varsities, others to the Continent; a few even enjoyed the finishing advan-

tages of a trip round the world. They were children of his journalistic friends, or little ones who had lost their parents. I shall follow their careers with interest. We all know it was a great grief to him that he had no children of his own.

“But there, my dear,” he would say, “no *one* person can have everything in life; there is a crumpled rose-leaf everywhere, so count your blessings and you will realize you are well off. Wouldn’t it be dull if we had our every wish gratified?”

Had my Chief had children, he would have had no leisure to father so many waifs and strays. He never failed to inquire from time to time after my little family, the three children I adopted twelve years ago.

One of his greatest pleasures was his annual camp at Broadstairs for the boys from Poplar. It was a summer camp for about 500, and these young town-bred schoolboys had a joyous holiday, most of them seeing the sea and country for the first time. Everything was provided for their comfort. They had special trains to take them to and fro, and sports of every description were organized to fill their days. He loved these weeks beyond everything. He entered into their games with that joyousness

and youthful spirit which marked him even to the end. It was an unwritten law that he had a bachelor party at his Broadstairs home during that time, and invitations were eagerly accepted by his old friends. Whenever suitable vacancies occurred in his various businesses, his thoughts would turn to his friends, as he called them, in Poplar, and inquiries were made for suitable candidates.

He took great interest in Sir Arthur Pearson's "Fresh Air Fund," and it was my duty to see that each year his journals, the *Daily Mail*, *Evening News* and *Weekly Dispatch*, gave it full publicity. He continually noticed the backs of those rows and rows of grim, dreary-looking houses, which we all see from the railway carriage windows when entering big manufacturing towns, and when the schemes for the Garden Cities were put before him he entered into them with characteristic energy and zest.

He was for ever thinking how he could help those less fortunate than himself. He understood in no small measure what the blind missed in life. So far back as 1906 he had the *Daily Mail* printed in Braille and this was continued until the middle of the war, when it was taken over by the National Institute for the Blind.

Father Dolling's name is engraved on my memory. A great friendship existed between that famous east end preacher and Lord Northcliffe. This was evident in his great anxiety lest Father Dolling should not recover from the serious illness which ended his life. Neither effort nor money was spared, everything that could be done was done, and it was a great grief when he lost his friend. He afterwards interested himself financially in the seaside Dolling Memorial Home, and devoted a lot of time to its organization. The Rev. Hugh Chapman, and Sir Owen Seaman, Editor of *Punch*, did not appeal in vain for his help when starting the well-known Normyl Cure for Inebriates.

Incidents crowd upon my mind as I write, but one will always remain as of yesterday. It was Christmas, 1902. I was sent to Coutts's Bank for several £50 notes. On my return I addressed several envelopes under his direction, and into each one placed a note.

"I want you to deliver these personally this afternoon, and in no manner disclose my name. They are old friends of my father's, and people I knew in my young days, but now down and out."

Several of them were for the Temple, and when I convinced myself I was face to face with these old friends, I parted with my gifts,

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and flew down the creaking stairs as quickly as possible lest I should be traced.

He was very witty, and always saw the humorous side of things. I recollect with what boyish glee he told me how just before boarding a channel boat he bought, as was his habit, a complete set of newspapers to read on the journey. He was wearing a travelling ulster and cap well pulled down, with his papers in a bundle under his arm, when he was tapped on the shoulder by a passenger, and "*Times*, please," was bellowed in his ear. I have forgotten whether he parted with his copy or not! His appreciation of amusing incidents was easily seen. A member of the Editorial staff sauntered into the office one evening, and seeing a colleague, as he thought, bending over a desk writing, slapped him vigorously on the back and said: "Thank God, the old man has gone to the Continent; now we shall have peace."

"Oh no, he hasn't," said Lord Northcliffe, looking up and enjoying the offender's confusion. An invitation to dinner closed the incident.

An epidemic of loss of memory once spread over the country, and Lord Northcliffe was perturbed by the disappearance of his valet for a few days. I suggested he had lost his memory.

“ Oh no,” he said, “ that is all very well for the newspapers, but not for my domestic staff ! ”

As Joseph remained in his service, I presume he gave a satisfactory explanation.

My readers must not imagine that life was altogether a bed of roses. Suffering once from a sense of injustice, I had a heated argument with Lord Northcliffe, and in the midst of it he stopped me and said : “ Look in the mirror my dear and see how hideous your face is ! I can tolerate it when it is cheerful, but now—impossible ! ” Who could refrain from smiling and so recovering equanimity ?

Reference has been publicly made to his extensive private pension list for what he called “ deserving cases.” It was a lengthy one, and once on the list meant being there for life, and the amounts were not small. Not only his immediate circle, but others with scarcely any claim were made comfortable for life. This list was very private, he preferred people to think of him as a monster, rather than the warm-hearted man he was.

I have heard it said by those who do not know, that the sufferings and troubles of the

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rich are non-existent, that money heals all wounds. How untrue! Lord Northcliffe, though very rich himself, repeatedly said: "Money does not bring happiness, but it can round off the corners of life, in that it enables one to travel, and to help crowds of lame dogs over stiles."

As an Irishwoman I always realized that the transposition of the first two letters in "acres" spells "cares."

"Medical men should be paid handsomely by rich people," Lord Northcliffe would say. "They give much of their time, thought and energy to the poor without any recompense."

His interest, work and pecuniary help aided many hospitals, and Lord Knutsford, that prince of beggars, never appealed to him in vain.

Though it is not generally known, he was a great lover of music. On one occasion he played to me on the piano with obvious pride his earliest compositions, and remarked that by those he earned his first money. He took a great interest in pictures and tapestries, and had many beautiful examples in his homes. He loved colour, and expressed his admiration for Mostyn's famous garden scenes, and the work

of that brilliant young artist, the late Lovat Fraser.

His Spartan life would astonish many of his readers. He ate sparingly, drank but little alcohol, and usually retired to bed between 9 and 10 o'clock. He was not strong, and only by this *régime* could he conserve his energy and strength. Lord Northcliffe had no expensive hobbies. He spent very little money on himself, and having known in his early days what it was to be "hard-up," he hated waste of any kind. I have been called over the coals for carelessness, especially for omitting to switch off the electric lights. He loved fishing, but his real pleasure was reading, mostly biographies and books of travel. I am very pleased that he took with him and read on his last tour my little birthday gift: Steele's translation of "Aristotle's Letters to Alexander the Great."

A few years ago Lord Northcliffe was advised by his doctor to take up golf. He hated it, and would have given it up had not Sandy Thomson, the well-known professional, thought otherwise. There was no escape; wet or fine at 9 o'clock Sandy called for him wherever he happened to

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be. The Chief used to tell us how he would even ignore the valet's excuse and walk into the bedroom, and persuade him against that first instinct of dodging a lesson, when an east wind was blowing. He took such interest in Lord Northcliffe's game, that within a very short time his handicap was reduced to single figures, and it was through the perseverance of the professional that he enjoyed good health for many years. Sandy's Scottish humour delighted Lord Northcliffe, and the list of golfing "Commandments" which he drew up and insisted upon his pupil reciting every day before playing, afforded much amusement to the Chief and his friends. For many years he travelled with Lord Northcliffe, and became almost an international figure, for very few people missed meeting "Sandy"; he and Pine (my Chief's loyal chauffeur for 20 years) looked after him with boyish devotion, each doing his best to serve him well.

Lord Northcliffe had no sympathy with habitual grumblers, those who hugged their grievances and repeated them again and again to their colleagues and friends, instead of going to headquarters. It was for this reason he had a golden rule: he would listen to complaints from every member of his staff, and that faculty

of seeing at once both sides of the question served him well. Like Aristotle, he always said : "First of all, let's get the facts." That determination to deal with facts and to see both sides always impressed me, for he saw people as they are, and not as they ought to be. He would say : "As if anyone ever knew the whole truth about anyone."

Fulsome flattery he heartily disliked. "He is an impossible person, my dear. He agrees with everything I say—right or wrong."

And he summed up very clearly the worth of those who thought they would succeed by paying him compliments.

Lord Northcliffe acquired *The Times* in 1908, and March 17 was a momentous day for us, for *The Times* is the most powerful thing in the whole world. It is already recorded in detail how he stepped in and obtained control, fore-stalling the late Sir Arthur Pearson. It seems hardly possible that during the passing of those 14 years so many things have changed. He did not attempt to alter the character of that famous journal ; his ambition was to maintain its traditions, and he worked for that end. Only those in close association with him during those early days know of the struggle he had,

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and the obstacle-makers he encountered ; it was like knocking his head repeatedly against a brick wall. He devoted much of his precious time to improving the appearance of the paper ; the ink, printing, publishing and advertising, for nothing escaped his attention. He had great difficulty, I remember, in introducing electric light into some parts of Printing House Square, and how he urged and urged the late Mr. Moberly Bell to save his energy and time by dictating his letters to a stenographer, instead of laboriously writing them by hand. To be up-to-date and take advantage of labour-saving appliances, such as the typewriter, is not breaking tradition ; and putting the great journal on a sounder footing was surely the only way to maintain its place as the greatest newspaper in the world. He often spoke to me of the future of *The Times*. He thought he would like it carried on as a national institution after his death, but the scheme was not practical. He had a dread of politicians or foreign financiers obtaining control and using it against the interest of the British Empire, or to further the ambitions of a few unscrupulous people anxious for power. His foreign travels and knowledge of public affairs helped him unquestionably, and the few who criticized his work and spoke so slightly of it, displayed their ignorance. I wonder what they would have done had they

been in his place? Personally, I think that but for him the journal would have perished.

He met nearly every person of interest the world over. It was not "Who are you?" but "What are you?" He had no use for those who, bearing great names, were content to live on that. It saddened him when he saw such people failing to uphold their fine traditions. He knew how much Great Britain owed to those families who devoted themselves to honoured service for their country. Ordinary "Society" people bored him. He was most happy with those of his own craft.

There was, I remember, great excitement in Fleet Street, and particularly in Carmelite House, when it became known that Lord Northcliffe had been chosen as the central figure of a forthcoming play. We naturally felt very curious, and I remember how the whole staff gathered at the first night performance of *The Earth*, by Fagan. I confess to disappointment, for I knew the Chief so well, and could trace in the play no resemblance either to his character or work. On my returning home Lord Northcliffe telephoned me, "I hope you have had an amusing evening." He was disappointed when I told him it was a failure.

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“ My dear,” he said, “ I could have done it so much better ; I should have torn him to shreds had I been the author.”

Another play, *What the Public Want*, by Arnold Bennett. That incomparable actor, Hawtrey, played the character representing Lord Northcliffe, but here again no resemblance. Both authors seized on what they thought to be the man’s personality, but failed hopelessly. He always enjoyed a joke against himself, and these dramatic efforts afforded him great amusement.

I flatter myself that I absorbed a little philosophy in that “ Street of Adventure,” to borrow Sir Philip Gibbs’s apt description of Fleet Street. Lord Northcliffe taught me to close an eye to faults, but open both wide where praise was due. This has helped me considerably, and I am sure it is worth remembering. He practised it himself, and was very generous in his praise, whether he sent cables to his correspondents stationed in out of the way parts of the globe, or messages to his staff nearer home. He would send cheques to the wives of his writers with a characteristic note : “ Please accept the enclosed as a souvenir of your husband’s delightful article this morning, it gave me great pleasure.” Sometimes he would send

a basket of fruit or choice flowers, or even a piece of jewellery. He had the priceless faculty of giving pleasure in an unexpected manner. He seldom returned from a holiday without several gifts for the wives of those who served him.

Mentioning gifts reminds me of the first trinket he ever gave me. On the eve of leaving London for a holiday abroad he bade us all “good-bye,” and as an afterthought turned to me and said: “Get your ears pierced while I am away, and I will buy you a pair of pearl earrings.”

Overjoyed, I rushed to the jeweller for the operation, and in my ears I wore gold-wire rings. I glued my eyes to the Bond Street windows, and selected in my imagination pearl drops reaching almost to my shoulders, even trying the effect with beads, and nodding my head to get accustomed to them. On his return three months later no mention was made of earrings! My pride was too hurt to refer to the subject, although I could not refrain from touching the gold wires in my ears rather ostentatiously. Many months passed, until I had almost forgotten the promise, when one day he took from his waistcoat pocket a case measuring a square inch.

“Here are your earrings, my dear, I hadn’t

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forgotten them." On my opening the case my face must have betrayed my surprise, for instead of dangling drops I saw two very small pearl studs. I put them on, "Very nice, very neat, just what I would like my sister to wear."

I afterwards realized that his was the better taste. He detested ostentation in any form. Of all people I have met no one loved simplicity more; his taste was unerring, and those who have visited his homes will agree with me.

If I waited long for the earrings, I certainly had other unexpected gifts. I remember once being late, and my excuse was that my watch (an inexpensive one) had lost time. Without a moment's hesitation he switched his gold repeater from his chain, and putting it on my desk he said: "Keep this, I know it is a good time-keeper, and never be late again."

I thought he had given it to me on the impulse of the moment, as I could see it was of value, so the next day I offered it back, but he refused it. It is now my most precious possession, and I shall treasure it all my life.

On the eve of his birthdays, and at Christmas, my advice was sought by his friends and valued members of his staff about suitable presents.

They all wanted to give him something unique. A simple message of love and loyalty pleased him most, but those who had so much from him wanted their feelings to take a more practical form. I assured them he detested gifts, but without avail; and my thoughts now turn to the "Museum," as he called the safe where he kept these offerings, and I am wondering what their final destination will be.

Lord Northcliffe was very generous in the matter of holidays, and Fleet Street knows of the unexpected cheques which some of us received to enable us to take our holidays further afield than our finances permitted. I well remember how I obtained my first winter holiday, by going to sleep! As I have already mentioned, we had no fixed hours for work; often our busiest time would be the evening, when others had finished. Lord Northcliffe would return to the office after dinner to collect work I had prepared for him. He was extra late one evening, and tired out by waiting I had fallen asleep. He realized for the first time that I was overworked, and was very distressed. So I was packed off the next day.

He was a great believer in the educational value of travel, and encouraged it in all of us,

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from the directors to the humblest members of the staff.

“I can see the business better if I get away from it, so I am off to the Continent to-morrow.”

How often I heard this said. Sometimes the journey would be to the extreme north of Scotland, to Ireland, or a motoring tour through Wales. He insisted on seeing things first hand, and thus learning how best he could serve his own people. His love for our Empire was the one passion of his life; it became almost an obsession. He did all that man could do to further its interests, and link up our scattered possessions with an unbreakable chain of love and understanding. He believed in making known to the public the life and the conditions in our Empire overseas, and he spared neither money nor effort in doing this. It is well known how he established a weekly edition of the *Daily Mail*, and published it at a ridiculously cheap rate, so that all our people to the farthest points of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, and our other lonely lands should be kept in touch with home affairs, and encouraged to feel they were always in our thoughts. When the life of Lord Northcliffe is written, recording his great work, it will be seen how he was responsible in a very large measure for keeping the British Flag, and all its

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stands for, in the hearts of the present generation of our countrymen overseas. He was the prime mover in establishing the Overseas Club, whose influence now reaches round the world.

It is an open secret that Lord Northcliffe had a great admiration for France and her people, and spent many of his holidays there. In my early days he complained to me how he missed his morning newspaper, but he soon remedied that by starting the Paris *Daily Mail*. It has been for years a great boon to travellers both in Paris and farther afield. I welcomed the idea, I could see myself being sent to Paris on business, and incidentally returning with a new hat. Personally I seized every opportunity of seeing the world of which I was daily hearing.

The Manchurian War was drawing to a close, and the exiled British War correspondents were on their way home, when they were detained in Petrograd owing to the unsettled state of the country. Charles Hands, our brilliant writer, had been absent from England over a year, and it occurred to Lord Northcliffe that he (Charles) would much appreciate a surprise visit from his wife, so he arranged that Mrs. Hands should join her husband there. I can always remember the tribute he paid to

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Charlie Hands : " So lovable, staunch, wise, and without an ugly thought," and he smilingly added, " I only had a good time on my first visit to America because I said I knew Charles, his name was my passport ! "

Owing to the rigorous climate she was going to, Lord Northcliffe gave Mrs. Hands instructions to purchase a fur-lined coat for the journey. She invited me to assist her in her choice, and together we went one Saturday morning to Bond Street. While we were so occupied, the assistant pressed me to try one on.

" A fur coat is of no use to me ; I am not going to Russia," I said, and then the vision of myself wearing the coat flashed into my mind. " If I did go to Russia I could have the coat," so, acting on impulse, I fled from the shop to the Post Office near by, and wrote a request to Lord Northcliffe for permission to go.

He was on the eve of taking a trip to the South of France, and was due to leave London that same evening. My note was sent to his house, where were gathered Lord Rothermere, the late Kennedy Jones, and one or two others, settling affairs before he left. It was read aloud, and " K. J.," as we affectionately called him, always assured me he persuaded Lord Northcliffe to say " Yes."

Every day is still as fresh in my memory as

in those days long past. The revolution in Petrograd, with its shooting and attendant excitements, filled me with wonder. Even the ticket collector's remark at Charing Cross, when my destination was noticed, I liked.

“ If you are for Russia, Miss, your days are numbered ; you'll never return alive ” !

I have since travelled all over Europe, spent a winter in India, and six months in Egypt, where I was entertained by Lord Kitchener. I found him very human, nothing sphinx-like, as I was led to believe. My last far-away trip was to America, and when in Washington during the Conference I heard from the President, and all the leading Americans I had the privilege of meeting, of Lord Northcliffe's great work. They knew, with me, that he was the greatest friend America ever had, and he did more to bring about good understanding between the two nations than any other man in public life. He took a leading part in the formation of the English Speaking Union, and always gave it his great support. If ever I enjoyed any popularity, either here or abroad, it was only “ reflected glory.”

From the time I first knew Lord Northcliffe until well on in the War, he would never allow his name to be mentioned in his journals with-

out his special permission ; he preferred to remain behind the scenes. For many years previous to 1914, he had correspondents in Germany, gathering details about naval and military progress, activity at Krupps, and industrial conditions. This information was tabulated and sent by him to our then leading politicians, some of whom were grateful, others not.

These facts came to the knowledge of the Kaiser himself, and a request was made to Lord Northcliffe to withdraw his representatives, who were embarrassing the German Government. He refused to comply. I well remember the Kaiser's last visit here, when a Court ball was given in his honour and Lord Northcliffe was invited. Shortly before midnight my telephone rang, and I heard my Chief's voice :

“ I have escaped from the wily Kaiser, my dear. It was made known to me that he wished me to be presented to him. I thought otherwise, so here I am at home, just going to bed.”

I have heard it said on many sides that Lord Northcliffe was very embittered because he did not take part in the Peace Conference. That is not true. We often discussed the matter before the Armistice, and he repeatedly told me how urgent it was for him to watch, and use his newspapers to the best of his ability.

Walking in his garden at Broadstairs in the early part of the War, and hearing the booming of guns across the channel, he remarked, "I hope I shall live to see the end of this, and to keep an eye on the Treaty. I know these crafty politicians and how they would sell their very souls for material gain."

And we then spoke of the "hidden hand," and all that was happening behind the scenes. Had he taken part in the Peace Conference himself, his newspapers would have suffered; he could not have published what he heard, and he could best serve our Empire as an onlooker.

In early 1919 Lord Northcliffe was faced with a very serious operation, and was sent to the South of France to regain the strength he had lost through overwork during the War. He arranged to return home in April, but his doctors insisted on his remaining in Paris until the weather in England became warmer. These few days were seized upon by his political opponents to hold him up to ridicule, "waiting for the summons that never came." His health was such that had Kings, Presidents or Prime Ministers gone on their bended knees for his aid to straighten their tangles, his doctors would have forbidden it. I was in Paris, and on the day after Mr. Lloyd George had returned to

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London I remarked to Lord Northcliffe: "I have read the report of the Prime Minister's attack on you, I feel sorry for him."

"Why sorry, my dear?"

"Because I feel he has gone too far."

"I don't mind attacks," the Chief replied. "As you know, I am used to them. But what does depress me is that the Prime Minister at a time like this, when every moment is of value in dealing with these world problems, should occupy the attention of the House, even inviting the young Prince to hear him, in abusing me. It shows the mentality of the Premier, and how he lacks all sense of proportion. No ordinary man like myself should at this time figure so prominently before the world. But there he is, bent on advertising me."

Have politicians memories? I often wonder, when I think of the favours asked and granted, but so soon forgotten. Listening to an attack on Lord Northcliffe in the House of Commons one day, I noticed a certain member's loud applause. It was with surprise that I recognized him the following day when he called at Carmelite House to request a favour! Remembering his enthusiasm of the previous evening, I recalled it to his mind, and had great pleasure in showing him the door. Others more exalted

have sought Lord Northcliffe. I remember many years ago Mr. Lloyd George himself at Carmelite House, and Mr. Winston Churchill on another occasion. Lord Curzon, even, did not disdain his aid ; I remember the pleading letters sent from Simla to my Chief, asking for his help. Lord Northcliffe was secretly approached from time to time by many prominent people, who urged him to expose the shortcomings of various individuals and departments. He was to "face the music," but they preferred to remain anonymous. If successful, they were to take the credit, if not, he could take the blame. How often I urged him to leave them alone, and tell them to take their grievances to their own superiors. That "sixth sense" which he credited me with served me well. I was able to discern the difference between the patriot and the sycophant. While I was returning from New York on the *Aquitania*, I had an invitation to tea from Sir James Charles, the famous captain, and the conversation turned upon Lord Northcliffe, who had previously christened the vessel the "Wonder Ship."

"I admire Lord Northcliffe," said my host, "but I think it wrong that he should have so much power."

"How would you alter it?" I enquired, getting very interested.

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“By preventing any one man from controlling more than one newspaper,” he answered.

To which I said, “If he had only *one*, that would become even more powerful than the many. It is a power he has built up himself, and you can no more stop him than you can the waves dashing against your own ship.”

He paid the penalty of greatness. After his death one or two small-minded people could not restrain their pens from belittling him and endeavouring to reduce his life's work to a business footing. These little souls who carped at him, what have they done for humanity? Will their names echo round the world, and live in history?

It was for the masses he worked, not for the high-brow crank whose literary style may be so highly polished that only the surface can be seen. Lord Northcliffe's name will be handed down for generations, while the fame of these writers will disappear as ripples do on water.

All the world mourned his passing, and tributes poured in from every corner of the globe. I was much touched by the letters and messages which came to me from friends, all dwelling on that irresistible and lovable nature which was hidden from the general public.

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He was so much to us ; we got from him more than mere employment, and the things that this world reckons as being worth while, for he gave to us a little of his own strength and spirit, and above all he encouraged us to love and work for our Empire. He was our best guide in life, and we, his staff, feel that though the lamp has burned itself out, it has left its glow upon our memories.

Somehow we never associated death with our Chief, he was so intensely alive. At the funeral service in the Abbey, where all round were the faces of those who loved him, I felt the whole atmosphere was one of deep affection. I saw friends whom he had not seen for years. But what touched me most were those loyal people who, even though they had been "sacked" by him, came to pay their tribute to his memory, many with their eyes dimmed with tears. As I passed into the Abbey I heard one man say to another : "If there is a heaven, Northcliffe is there."

There has never been anyone just like him before, and there never will be again, and the world is the poorer for his death.

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